

THE DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC
of
THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
presents

EXPLORATIONS

Sunday, February 17, 1974 at 8:00 p.m.
Convocation Hall, Arts Building

TROIS CHANSONS Arthur Honegger
(Extraites de "La Petite Sirene" d'Andersen)

Chanson des Sirènes
Berceuse de la Sirène
Chanson de la Poire

DAS MARIENLEBEN Paul Hindemith

Geburt Mariä
Argwohn Josephs
Geburt Christi
Stillung Mariä mit dem Auferstandenen
Vom Tode Mariä I I I

Elizabeth Stangeland, soprano
Robert Stangeland, piano

SONATA FOR VIOLONCELLO AND PIANO Andre Prevost

Peter Rudolphi, cello
Janet Scott, piano

ITALIAN MADRIGALS

El grillo Josquin
Voi ve n'andat'al cielo Jacques Arcadelt
Ma per me lasso Luca Marenzio
Dissi a l'amata mia lucida stella Luca Marenzio
Matona, mia cara Orlando di Lasso

ENGLISH MADRIGALS

Sing we and chant it Thomas Morley
Cease mine eyes Thomas Morley
Thus saith my Cloris bright John Wilbye
Alas, what hope of speeding John Wilbye
Fair Phyllis John Farmer

The University of Alberta Madrigal Singers
Larry Cook, director

INTERMISSION

QUINTET IN Eb FOR PIANO
AND WINDS, OP. 16 Ludwig van Beethoven

Grave—Allegro ma non troppo
Andante cantabile
Rondo—Allegro ma non troppo

Dayna Fisher, oboe
Ernest Dalwood, clarinet
John Ellis, horn
Michio Wakabayashi, bassoon
Helmut Brauss, piano

NOTES

After publication of the first version of *Das Marienleben* in 1923, Hindemith continued to work on this song cycle. At first he limited himself to small improvements, but later undertook more basic changes, culminating in the appearance of a completely new version in 1948, along with an extensive preface written by the composer. Here he tells of the special importance it had for him: "The powerful impression . . . which the work produced in its hearers right from its first performance made me conscious for the first time in my musical life of the ethical obligations of music and the moral responsibilities of the musician." In the new version, "every element is fixed by the overall conception of the work," in ordered structures that Hindemith felt would be directly or indirectly perceived by the listener.

The songs selected for this program are drawn from each of four major divisions of the cycle as defined by Hindemith: No. 1 is from the group dealing with Mary's personal experience; No's. 5 and 7 from the dramatic songs of the cycle (although No. 7 is related in subject and character to No. 1); No. 12 from songs about Mary's suffering; and No. 15 (last in the cycle) from a group that serves as an epilogue entering the realm of spiritual abstraction.

* * * *

The Swiss composer Arthur Honegger generally showed somewhat more reluctance to denounce traditional tenets of serious, largescale composition than did many of his musical colleagues in Paris of the 1920's. Although no devotee of the excesses of German post-romanticism or expressionism, or of French impressionism, neither did he embrace unabashedly the purposeful frivolity or sophisticated naiveté that some assumed to be the truest musical expression of the times. Nevertheless, his three songs on texts of René Morax after Andersen's "The Little Mermaid" reflect many of the main tendencies of French music of the Twenties: miniature dimensions; clarity of texture; piquant dissonance without excessive harmonic density; simplicity of melodic line; particular attention to piano and vocal sound colorations; and above all, great care for declamation of the text.

* * * *

André Prévost (1934 -) is presently a professor of composition and analysis at the University of Montreal. He studied composition with Clermont Pépin in Canada and with Olivier Messiaen and Henri Dutilleul in France. His Sonata for Violoncello and Piano was first performed in Paris in 1962, and has had numerous performances since then.

As with so many works of this century, the designation "sonata" here means only that the work is to be played by instruments, with no implications as to more definite formal principles. Prévost's sonata consists of three major sections played without pause. The opening and closing adagio sections, based on similar material, enclose a central allegro. Much of the piece is based on various tone rows, and rhythms tend to be fluid or improvisatory in character in the outer sections. Yet the music speaks at very immediate levels: In keeping with the traditional concept of the cello as a lyrical instrument, melodic lines are broadly arched, not jagged or fragmentary. In the middle allegro, where rhythm becomes more percussive and melodic lines less continuous, the music still seems controlled by a sure sense of pacing and dramatic climax.

Probably the strongest contributing factor to the immediacy of the piece is the highly repetitive nature of much of its material. Concomitant with this are its slow rate of harmonic change (somewhat reminiscent of Messiaen's music, often static to the point of hypnosis) and its general lack of linear counterpoint to complicate the texture. Throughout, the piano plays mostly long-sustained chords or ostinato patterns, leaving the cello free to range over wide melodic spans. Even though the middle allegro poses contrasts of tempo and texture, the two instruments continue to operate on separate musical planes, with little obvious interaction by linear or motivic means. In this section, repetition is directed toward forward propulsion rather than (in the adagio sections) toward suspension of the sense of progression.

* * * *

Secular vocal music of the sixteenth century was subject to strong political and artistic international cross-currents. Josquin (a Netherlander) was working in Italy when he composed the frottola "El grillo" in the late fifteenth century. This light genre of Italian vocal music was influential on the course of both Italian and French secular music. The madrigal by Arcadelt (also a Netherlander) shows the greater refinement and sophistication coming into that genre in the 1530's and 1540's. With Luca Marenzio, the madrigal achieves a high point of dramatic expressiveness in which the general spirit as well as particular imagery of artful texts are integrally linked with musical structure. As one madrigalist of the time put it: "The notes are the body of the music, but the words are the soul." However, Lassus' madrigal reminds us that not all songs of the time were fraught with tears and their musically consequent suspensions and chromaticisms.

The English madrigal composers flourished when the phenomenal flood of Italian madrigal composition was already beginning to abate. At first, the madrigal was part of a general Elizabethan vogue for things Italian, but in time it took on a particularly English character. Emotional expression was less extreme. "Songfulness" was rarely sacrificed to the dramatic exigencies of the text, which itself tended to be less lofty than Italian counterparts. Pieces in general were more unified musically, rather than wandering from one sentiment to another. The music was thus more suited to performance in casual circumstances than were many Italian madrigals, often seemingly composed for the skilled professional singers retained by Italian princes. Yet the English madrigal is rightly considered one of the brightest facets of the so-called "Golden Age" of English music that was to last for much of the seventeenth century. We need only listen to Morley's "Cease mine eyes" to realize that the madrigal in England was a great deal more than jovial fa-la-las.

* * * *

Beethoven's Quintet for Piano, Oboe, Clarinet, Horn, and Bassoon, Op. 16, was composed in 1796, first performed the following year, and published in 1801. The work is thought to be modeled after one by Mozart (composed 1784) for the same instruments, in the same key, and following the same three-movement format. Beethoven's quintet (like his more popular Septet, Op. 20) clearly fits within the eighteenth-century conception of chamber music including wind instruments as tending toward light musical divertimento. Both the slow movement and the finale are in rondo form, usually calling for less complicated kinds of development than does classical sonata (first-movement) form. For the most part, the piano is the leader of the ensemble, getting first chance at the most important themes and having the most virtuosic patterns. The solo capabilities of the individual wind instruments are brought to the fore only intermittently, most notably in episodes of the slow movement.

—W. K.